

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MOSCOW 14014 161642Z

62

ACTION EUR-25

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NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 NIC-01 IO-14 FEA-02 AEC-11 AID-20 CEA-02

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2538

INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

AMCONSUL MUNICH

USMISSION NATO

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 14014

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ENRG, UR

SUBJ: TYUMEN' OBLAST': WHERE HAS ALL THE OIL GONE?

REF: MOSCOW A-265, 6/23/74

1. SUMMARY: SOVIET PRESS SEPT 13 REPORTS RECENT SESSION OF USSR MINISTRY OF GEOLOGY COLLEGIUM, DURING WHICH WERE DISCUSSED ANTICIPATED "SLACKENING OF FLOW" OF TYUMEN' OBLAST' OIL WITHIN NEXT FIVE TO SIX YEARS AND CONSEQUENT URGENT NEED TO IMMEDIATELY INTENSIFY EXPLORATION FOR OIL (AND GAS) IN EASTERN SIBERIA. REPORTS PRESENTED AT SESSION APPEAR TO INDICATE ABRUPT ABOUT-FACE FROM EARLIER ROSY SOVIET STATEMENTS CONCERNING LONG-TERM CAPABILITY OF TYUMEN' TO SUSTAIN UPWARD SPIRAL IN USSR OIL PRODUCTION. END SUMMARY

2. SHORT ARTICLE IN SEPT 13 SOTSIALISTICHESKAYA INDUSTRIYA
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PAGE 02 MOSCOW 14014 161642Z

REPORTS SESSION OF MINISTRY OF GEOLOGY COLLEGIUM, ATTENDED BY

LEADERSHIP PERSONNEL FROM MANY MINISTRIES AND AGENCIES, PARTY AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS FROM YAKUTSK ASSR, KRASNOYARSKIY KRAY, AND IRKUTSK OBLAST', AND SCIENTISTS FROM VARIOUS INSTITUTIONS. MAIN SPEAKERS AT MEETING WERE MINISTERS SHASHIN (OIL INDUSTRY) AND SIDORENKO (GEOLOGY), WHO REPORTED THAT FLOW OF TYUMEN' OIL--ON WHICH GROWTH IN USSR PRODUCTION PRIMARILY BASED--AFTER FIVE TO SIX YEARS "MAY SLACKEN SOMEWHAT" (MOZHET NESKOL'KO ZAMEDLIT'SYA). AT SAME TIME, USSR OIL REQUIREMENTS CONSTANTLY RISING. THEREFORE, PRIORITY NUMBER ONE ON MINISTRY OF GEOLOGY AGENDA MUST BE WIDE EXPANSION OF EXPLORATORY WORK IN EASTERN SIBERIA WITH VIEW TO CREATING "NEW RAW MATERIAL-MINERAL BASE" THERE. TARGET FOR THIS EFFORT APPARENTLY TO BE VAST EXPANSE OF SIBERIAN WASTELAND COMPRISING YAKUTIA, KRASNOYARSKIY KRAY, AND IRKUTSK OBLAST'.

3. SPEAKERS NOTED IMPORTANT GAS AND OIL DEPOSITS ALREADY BEING EXPLOITED IN REGION, PARTICULARLY MESSOYAKHISK AND SOLENINSK FIELDS WHICH SUPPLY NATURAL GAS FOR NORILSK MINING-METALLURGICAL COMPLEX AND VILYUYSK FIELDS CURRENTLY SUPPLYING GAS TO CITY OF YAKUTSK AND ITS POWER GENERATING STATION. STILL, POTENTIAL OF REGION LARGELY UNTAPPED, AS INDICATED BY FACT THAT DENSITY OF EXPLORATORY DRILLING IN AREA AMOUNTS TO ONLY ONE AND ONE-HALF METERS PER SQUARE KILOMETER.

4. IN CONCLUSION, COLLEGIUM SESSION RESOLVED THAT CREATION OF NEW BASE FOR OIL-EXTRACTING INDUSTRY IS ONE OF CHIEF TASKS BEFORE MINISTRY OF GEOLOGY. FURTHER, DURING 1975-80 PERIOD MINISTRY WILL BE REQUIRED TO EVALUATE PROSPECTS FOR MINERAL FUEL EXPLOITATION IN EASTERN SIBERIA AND TO PROVE NATURE AND EXTENT OF MAJOR DEPOSITS OF OIL AND GAS IN REGION.

5. COMMENT: FOR SOME TIME THERE IS KNOWN TO HAVE BEEN DIS-QUIET IN SOVIET OIL CIRCLES ABOUT DEVELOPMENT OF THAT SECTOR (SEE, FOR EXAMPLE, REPAIR REPORTING JUNE ARTICLE BY MINISTER SHASHIN ON SUBJECT). THIS IS FIRST TIME, HOWEVER, THAT EMBASSY HAS SEEN SUCH STRAIGHTFORWARD PREDICTION OF SLOWDOWN IN TYUMEN' OBLAST' OIL PRODUCTION BY 1980. AS RECENTLY AS LAST APRIL (SEE MOSCOW 5008) SOVIETS WERE STILL TALKING CONFIDENTLY OF PROVIDING JAPANESE WITH AT LEAST 25 MILLION TONS OF OIL ANNUALLY FROM TYUMEN' FOR 15 YEARS BEGINNING IN 1985, WITH SMALLER

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 MOSCOW 14014 161642Z

DELIVERIES UNTIL THEN.

6. IF INDEED SLACKING OFF OF TYUMEN' PRODUCTION WILL BEGIN AROUND 1980, TWO POSSIBLE REASONS APPEAR PLAUSIBLE TO EMBASSY. FIRST, TYUMEN' DEVELOPMENT MAY WELL BE PROCEEDING SO INEFFICIENTLY THAT HUGE QUANTITIES OF OIL ARE BEING LOST IN PROCESS. SECONDLY, ACTUAL RESERVES MAY BE SMALLER THAN SO-CALLED "PROVEN RESERVES" FOR AREA ON WHICH SOVIET OFFICIALS CONFIDENTLY

BASED THEIR DISCUSSIONS WITH JAPANESE. IF EITHER OF THESE
PREMISES SHOULD HOLD TURE, LESSON WILL HOPEFULLY NOT BE LOST ON
AMERICAN FIRMS INTERESTED IN SOVIET GAS AND OIL PROJECTS.

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